



## Staten Island Advance

### New Staten Island career center puts people in position for success

By Maura Yates  
September 28, 2010

Crisp in a business suit, Gehan Shanmuganathan, a 40-year-old Ph.D. candidate and college professor, came for advice while he's researching franchise opportunities.

Jason Gatling, 35, a Californian now living in Stapleton, was surfing the web, hoping for "any job I can find," preferably working in a kitchen.

And Michael Behar, the owner of two North Shore clothing stores, recently hired a manager and two sales associates pre-screened from a pool of qualified candidates.

This is the new Workforce 1.

It's having a grand opening celebration Thursday, but the directors gave the Advance a peek yesterday.

Relocated from Bay Street, the new office for the Staten Island Career Center and NYC Business Solutions Center opened in June at 120 Stuyvesant Pl. in St. George, where job-seekers can find one-on-one career advice, help in preparing a résumé, and access to computers.

Inside the clean, bright and professional new office, employers can find pre-screened job candidates who

have the skills they're looking for, which can save time and energy otherwise spent wading through a heap of job applications for candidates who aren't the right fit.

Owners of businesses of all sizes, and all stages, can take courses on developing business plans and marketing strategies, seek pro-bono legal assistance and, if they've been turned down for a bank loan, apply to non-traditional, non-profit lenders.

All the services are completely free through the program administered by the city's Department of Small Business Services.

SBS Commissioner Robert Walsh wants to spread the word to businesses across the Island about the resources available. Most important, he wants the public to know that this is a far cry from job centers of years ago. Those he likened to "a maze of bureaucracy," and "more like a police state than a place where you could get assistance and help."

"We want it to feel like a comfortable place," said Workforce 1 Director Keith Rasmussen. The services are open to everyone, regardless of income or employment status -- people from homeless shelters or who just earned a GED can sit alongside people who got laid off from Wall Street, or who already have jobs and are looking for another to supplement their income.

A university professor in his native Sri Lanka, Shanmuganathan was working as a cashier at a gas station convenience store. By chance, he met a member of the Workforce 1 staff who told him about the services available. Matched up with the College of Staten Island, he is now teaching marketing and business management and working on a doctorate in business administration.

When Behar was looking to hire staff for his two Oz clothing stores, in Stapleton and Mariners Harbor, he placed an ad on Craigslist. "There were good people there, but I really had to filter through the good and the bad," he said. Working with the Business Solutions Center "made it a lot easier to identify the type of candidates I was looking for." While one of his three hires didn't work out, "two out of three, that's not bad," he said, adding he just called the center to find some more employees for his sales floors and stock rooms.

"Small businesses are overwhelmed with résumés," said NYC Business Solutions Director Biguita Hernandez.

"When a business comes to us, they're going to find good people," Walsh said.

It was only the second day of Gatling's job search yesterday, as he searched for openings online. "There's a lot of opportunity here, I think," he said. "Hopefully I'll find something.

So far this year, 6,069 customers have been served, and 1,758 were placed in jobs.